

# Victim Compensation Connection

A bimonthly publication  
of the California Victim  
Compensation Program

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## NOVA CONFERENCE features "Programs & Partnerships"

*From the Desk of Karen McGagin, Executive Officer*

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*Helping California Crime  
Victims Since 1965*

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**V C G C B**  
Victim Compensation & Government Claims Board

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The July NOVA Conference was a wonderful reminder of the importance of collaboration in providing services to victims of crime. Victim/witness assistance staff, service providers, law enforcement and victims gathered in Reno to strengthen existing relationships and build new partnerships. The conference featured a special tribute to five victims. Each person spoke at the conference, recounting their stories of courage:



- Colleen Thompson Campbell – Campbell's only son was murdered in 1982, and six years later her brother and his wife were murdered. The criminal justice system proved to be grossly insensitive to her rights as a victim, and this inspired Campbell to found Memory of Victims Everywhere (MOVE), become a leading spokesperson for victims' rights, and help achieve passage of the California Crime Victims Justice Reform Act.
- Paula Cook – Cook endured the pain of domestic violence. Her father, long divorced from her mother, returned in 2001 after five years to shoot and kill her mother, then himself. Cook was helped by a victim advocate in Las Vegas, and that inspired her to do the same. She now helps victims as a member of a domestic violence task force.
- Polly Franks – Franks' two children were victimized in 1995 by a former neighbor who turned out to be a convicted serial sexual predator. Franks, though disabled and in a wheelchair, became a private investigator to track down the predator and bring him to justice. She later founded the Franks Foundation in Virginia to help protect children from sexual predators.
- Sandy Heverly – Heverly, her mother, husband and four children were all injured in a crash by a drunk driver in 1983. The injuries ultimately led to her mother's death. The offender was penalized with a small fine, leading Heverly to fight back by co-founding STOP DUI, an organization based in Las Vegas whose mission is to help victims and put a stop to violent drunk driving accidents.
- Pam McCoy – McCoy's son was murdered in 2002, shot ten times by his fiancée's ex-boyfriend. McCoy joined the Alliance for Victims' Rights in Reno, NV, and works to improve assistance for victims and raise public awareness.

These speakers are an inspiration to us all.



## Goes Live

### In Los Angeles and Santa Clara Counties

During late July and August, the Victim Compensation Program's partners in the City of Los Angeles and counties of Los Angeles and Santa Clara began using CaRES (Compensation and Restitution System).

It's the biggest step yet in CaRES' statewide rollout. The three offices handle a large volume of claims, well over one-fourth of the state's total victim compensation payments to crime victims.

Training was provided to LA County, LA City and Santa Clara County staff the week before they started using CaRES to process claims. The VCP is supporting the statewide rollout by expanding resources to handle document intake and scanning. It is also providing "super fax" machines to county partners so they can transmit two-sided documents directly into the system.

"CaRES is a quantum leap forward from the old mainframe VOX computer technology and it brings fundamental changes to the program's business processes and services to victims," said Laura Hill, Deputy Executive Officer for the VCP.

One fundamental change with CaRES is that all paper claim documents are faxed or scanned into the system, becoming electronic images, part of a comprehensive electronic record for each claim. Claim information is then available at Internet



**Pictured above, from front to back, Santa Clara County staff members Carmelo Ortiz, Anhminh Vu and Tiffanie Stevens train at VCP headquarters. Standing behind them is CaRES trainer, Larry Green.**

speeds, compared to the slower process of physically tracking down hard-copy files.

Hill praised the contribution made by the three county partners – Sacramento, San Joaquin and San Bernardino – who have been working with the VCP to enhance CaRES during the pilot phase of the statewide rollout.

"CaRES has come a long way, thanks to the teamwork with our county partners and a lot of hard work by our information technology and VCP staff," said Hill.

To support the statewide rollout, the VCP continually upgrades CaRES software and hardware to improve the system's responsiveness, efficiency and speed. The VCP also works closely with county staff to ensure that local computer resources and Internet connectivity meet CaRES' specifications.

One popular new CaRES feature is a claim summary screen that allows county users and headquarters customer service staff to quickly review highlights of a claim's status. Already in place or soon to be launched are further enhancements, such as a benefit determination summary screen, an automated interface with the State Controller to speed payments, and a new online version of the VCP application.

Reports from LA County staff indicate they are excited about going live on CaRES and appreciate having VCP headquarters staff alongside them during the first transition week.

## New and Updated Items Support Victim Compensation Program Outreach Efforts

As part of its ongoing efforts to increase public awareness of the Victim Compensation Program, the VCGCB has updated and introduced some key communications tools.

An updated "California Victim Compensation Program" brochure has been published. The brochure incorporates up-to-date information on benefits available to victims of violent crime.

The "California Victim Compensation Program" brochure is a dual English/Spanish language publication and contains a center section that lists phone numbers for all California county victim/witness assistance centers.

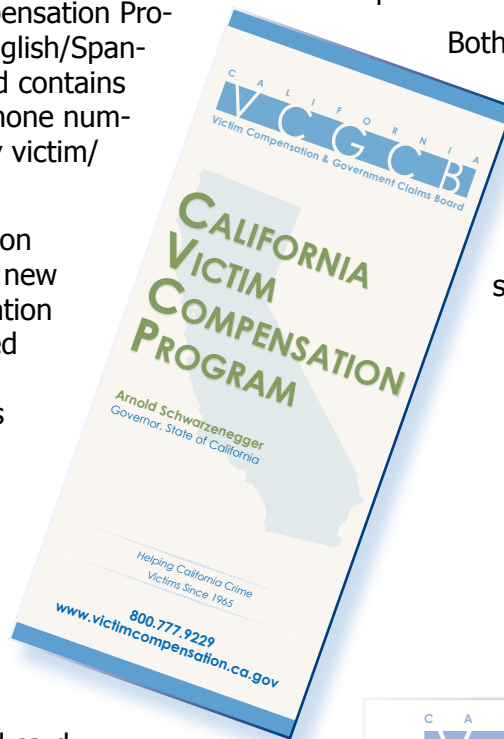
With expanded information on restitution and appeals, the new "California Victim Compensation Program" booklet is designed to meet the needs of more crime victims and applicants who require basic information about their rights and options.

For the first time, a law-enforcement job-aid card is available in a convenient business-card size format. Called the law-enforcement job-aid card because one of its primary uses is to

help law enforcement officers fulfill their responsibility to advise crime victims of available rights and resources, the new card is coated for durability and available in both English and Spanish versions.

Separate publications focusing on Restitution for Victims, Restitution for Offenders and Appeals are also being updated and will remain available for those who need detailed information on these topics.

Both the updated "California Victim Compensation Program" brochure and new law-enforcement job-aid card can be requested along with other publications via the Materials Request Form available in the "Forms and Publications" section of the VCGCB website, [www.vcgcb.ca.gov](http://www.vcgcb.ca.gov).



**If you have been injured or threatened with physical injury in a violent crime such as:**

- Assault
- Domestic violence
- Drunk driving
- Homicide
- Robbery
- Sexual assault
- Stalking

[www.vcgcb.ca.gov](http://www.vcgcb.ca.gov)

**Compensation can help pay for:**

- Medical bills
- Dental bills
- Funeral costs
- Mental health treatment
- Income loss
- Relocation
- Childcare expenses
- Crime scene cleanup

C A L I F O R N I A  
**VCGCB**  
Victim Compensation & Government Claims Board

**Were you injured in a crime?**

California's Victim Compensation Program may be able to help.

**800.777.9229**

## Crime Victims: Right to Appeal Decisions

**T**he Victim Compensation Program (VCP) exists to help victims of violent crime, and the program's appeals process was established to ensure that a thorough review of the claim was carried out.

After a claimant submits an application or request for reimbursement and receives a recommendation from the VCP, he or she may or may not agree with the decision. If there is a disagreement, the claimant can file an appeal. The claimant has 45 days from the date of the original recommendation to begin the appeals process.

The claimant fills out the appeal form sent from the VCP or, alternatively, can write a letter explaining why they believe the application or reimbursement should be approved.

"Under California law, VCP claimants have the right to appeal the program's administrative decisions," said Tim Eldred, Manager of the Appeals Process Section.

"We're here to work with victims who wish to have their case reviewed, and to conduct the appeals process in a timely manner."

The Appeals Process Section will review all the information submitted by the claimant, including any new facts not available at the time of the original decision in their case. After the evaluation is completed, the claimant will be advised in writing of the recommendation.

There are two outcomes that can result from the appeal:

- (1) The original recommendation may be changed and the application or request for reimbursement is approved; or
- (2) The application or request for reimbursement will continue to be denied. If it is again denied, claimants may be entitled to an administrative hearing.

If a claimant is entitled to a hearing, the VCP will advise them of the date and time of the hearing.

If a change of hearing date is desired, it's important to give the VCP at least ten days advance notice. To set a new date, claimants can contact VCP staff at **(800) 777-9229**.

For convenience, hearings can be conducted via telephone. However, an in-person session with the hearing officer can also be arranged. The hearing is an opportunity for claimants to explain their case and why the program's decision should be changed, they can also present supporting evidence and testimony.

Based on the information presented at the hearing, the hearing officer will prepare a proposed decision, which is presented to the Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board for consideration. The Board can adopt, change or reject the proposed decision, or return it to the hearing officer for further review. The claimant is advised of the Board's decision. There are options to appeal the decision further, if the claimant chooses.

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**"We're here ... to  
conduct the appeals  
process in a timely  
manner."**

**– Tim Eldred  
Appeals Process  
Section Manager**

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## VCGCB Board Member Honored

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**A**t its recent national conference, the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) presented Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board Member Michael Ramos with the Morton Bard Allied Professional Award.

Mr. Ramos, who is the District Attorney for San Bernardino County, was presented the award for his tireless work on behalf of victims' rights. One example of his contribution was his establishment of the "Prison Lifer Unit" in 2003 to ensure the continued incarceration of prisoners who had life sentences but were eligible for parole. Since 2002, of the 465 parole hearings held, only 19 prisoners were released.

This prestigious award recognizes individuals who are allies in the victim-assistance field. Some examples of these individuals are: lawyers, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, law enforcement professionals, corrections officers, prosecutors and judges.

Such an honor is not the first for Mr. Ramos. In 2000, Mr. Ramos received the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office Victim/Witness Assistance Program Victim Service Award, and in 1999 he received the Redlands Northside Impact Committee's Latino of the Year Award. He was also awarded the 1998 Mothers Against Drunk Drivers' Prosecutor of the Year Award.

The NOVA award is named after its originator, Dr. Morton Bard, the psychologist who in 1979 wrote "The Crime Victims Handbook," an influential guide to responding to victims of crime.

Dr. Bard also wrote the first law enforcement training materials on domestic violence in 1972 and continued with volunteer work in training victim service providers and law enforcement officers, also serving on the NOVA Board of Directors for a number of years.

Congratulations to Mr. Ramos for receiving this distinguished award.

The non-profit NOVA is composed of victim and victim/witness assistance programs and professionals, criminal justice agencies, mental health professionals, researchers, former victims and survivors, and others committed to increasing recognition and implementation of victim rights and services.



**Board Member, Michael Ramos**

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# Service Providers Make the Difference for Victims Recovering from Trauma of Violent Crime

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## Additional Customer Service Resources Being Dedicated to Crime Victim Service Providers

Every year thousands of victims of violent crimes receive valuable assistance in putting their lives back together from dedicated licensed healthcare professionals. By delivering medical, dental and mental health services to victims, they help victims recover from the physical and psychological trauma of violent crime.

One of the primary roles of the Victim Compensation Program (VCP) is to process bills from victim service providers.

To assist victims and their service providers, the VCP has made efforts to improve the technology used to process claims from victims and bills from service providers. To this end, the VCP is rolling out its new web-based claims management system, CaRES. As the VCP works to complete the transition to CaRES, it wants to ensure that service providers have dedicated customer service resources available in the event they have questions or concerns about how their bills are being handled.

Here are some of the customer service resources available for providers:

- The VCP continues to develop its full-service Customer Service Section, a process that is just one of the many revolutionary

changes that accompany the transition to the CaRES claims processing system. Providers can call our customer service staff at **(800) 777-9229**.

- VCP has posted a new bill status request form for providers on the VCGCB website at **[www.vcgcb.ca.gov](http://www.vcgcb.ca.gov)**. The form allows providers to conveniently fax in a request for the status of pending bills and helps the VCP work with providers to expedite payments. An interactive version of this form will soon be available on our website as well.
- If a provider has a question regarding a delayed payment, please contact the VCGCB Provider Ombudsman, Afzal Rashid, at **(916) 491-3580** or send your email inquiry to **[Afzal.Rashid@vcgcb.ca.gov](mailto:Afzal.Rashid@vcgcb.ca.gov)**

The VCP is working to ensure that the professionals who provide assistance to crime victims will receive prompt consideration when seeking payment for their services.